

Happiness Lecture Audioscript

From Teacher's Pack, Contemporary Topics 1-3

TEACHER: Did you hear about the lottery winner last night? The man won...what?...Two million dollars...?

STUDENT: No, three.

TEACHER: Three million dollars? Three million. That's a lot of money isn't it? Do you think that three million dollars would make you happy? ... I'm asking you this because when you ask people what they need to be happy, many people will answer "more money!" We assume that money will make us happier. But is this true? Will winning the lottery help you achieve happiness?

Today we're going to look at the idea of happiness, at the psychology of happiness—what makes some people happier than others. We'll look at three personality factors that we find in happy people. To find out about these personality factors, psychologists talked to hundreds of people. Now, first, they asked the people how happy they felt—you know, from "very happy" to "not happy at all." Then they asked some more questions. They wanted to find out about people's personalities, such as their attitudes about life, and so on. They looked at the differences between happy people and unhappy people. They found three factors that are very important for achieving happiness. So...let's look at those factors now.

The first personality factor is that happy people are...satisfied with themselves. This means that they like themselves as they are, and they're happy with what they have. Happy people may not like everything about their lives—they may be a little bit overweight, or may not have the best job, or may not live in a big, fancy house, but they don't need to change those things to be happy. They think more about things they are satisfied with, not the changes they want to make. This feeling of happiness comes from the inside, not from something outside.

TEACHER: So...happy people feel satisfied with themselves. On the other hand, unhappy people are often dissatisfied with themselves. They...uh...feel that something must change so they can be happy. They think if they lose some weight or get a better job or nicer house they will be happy. They are always looking for something outside themselves to make them happy. But the problem is—they never find it! No matter what they get, they're still dissatisfied and unhappy.

The second personality factor is that happy people are optimistic—they look at the positive side of life, not the negative. Now, we all have problems, whether we're happy or not. But when happy people have problems, they assume that things will improve. They don't worry a lot and think about all the bad things that can happen. Instead, they have a positive attitude. However, unhappy people are the opposite. They are optimistic and don't have a positive attitude. When they have a problem, they think about how bad everything is and assume that it'll get worse. So they make themselves even more unhappy when they think about all the bad things that might happen.

Finally, the third personality factor is that happy people have good relationships with other people. They try to have close, loving relationships are one of the most important factors in achieving happiness. So happy people don't spend all their time building their careers or trying to make money. They also spend time building relationships with friends and family. Now, on the other hand, unhappy people don't have as many close relationships. They may have trouble making friends. Or they may spend all their time working and then find that they're very lonely and unhappy. But for whatever reason, they don't have close relationships and this makes them unhappy.

So...what does this tell us? Well, if you want to be happier, don't assume that winning the lottery will help. There are other, more important factors for achieving happiness. Now, let's take a break, and when we come back we'll talk more about the factors that make a person happy.

Study: Experiences make us happier than possessions

adapted from

<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/HEALTH/02/10/happiness.possessions/index.html#cn-STCText>

(CNN) -- Even in tough economic times, you may find yourself with a bit of cash to spare. You've been working hard, and you want to treat yourself. Should you spend it on an experience, such as a baseball game or concert, or a material object?

An experience may generate positive memories that outlast the allure of a new material possession.

Psychological research suggests that, in the long run, experiences make people happier than possessions.

That's in part because the initial joy of acquiring a new object, such as a new car, fades over time as people become accustomed to seeing it every day, experts said. Experiences, on the other hand, continue to provide happiness through memories long after the event occurred.

Ryan Howell, assistant professor of [psychology](#) at San Francisco State University, presented his findings this week at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology annual meeting.

The study looked at 154 people enrolled at San Francisco State University, with an average age of about 25. Participants answered questions about a recent purchase -- either material or experiential -- they personally made in the last three months with the intention of making themselves happy.

While most people were generally happy with the purchase regardless of what it was, those who wrote about experiences tended to show a higher satisfaction at the time and after the experience had passed.

The most striking difference was in how participants said others around them reacted to either the purchased object or experience. Experiences led to more happiness in others than purchases did. A sense of relatedness to others -- getting closer to friends and family -- may be one of the reasons why experiences generate more happiness.

"When people spend money on life experiences, whether they also take someone with them or buy an extra ticket or whatever, most of our life experiences involve other individuals," Howell said. People were fulfilling their need for social bonding while having these experiences, he said.

Another reason for increased happiness in experiences, the researchers found, was that people felt a greater sense of vitality or "being alive" during the experience and in reflection, Howell said.

"As nice as your new computer is, it's not going to make you feel alive," he said.

Most psychologists who study the phenomenon say people adapt to a new purchase in six to eight weeks, up to a maximum of three months, Howell said. That means the initial pleasure we get from a new possession generally fades in a matter of months. ...